



March 12, 2008

Public Health Committee

H. B. No. 5666 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING EXPANSION OF THE PILOT PROGRAM FOR PERSONS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS.

and

S. B. No. 575 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A TASK FORCE TO STUDY DAY PROGRAM SERVICES OFFERED THROUGH THE DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES.

Good morning. I am Alyssa Goduti, Vice President for Public Policy, at the Connecticut Community Providers Association. CCPA represents organizations that provide services and supports to people with disabilities and other significant needs, including children and adults with substance use disorders, mental illness, developmental and physical disabilities.

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Community providers are the backbone of Connecticut's human service system. For years community based providers have collaborated with the state to ensure that critical services are provided in a manner that is accessible and affordable, yet maintains the highest standards of quality. Many CCPA members are providers under the current Autism Pilot and others serve on the Autism Pilot Steering Committee. They have worked to develop client selection criteria and map out this new and important area of service.

We welcome and opportunity to partner with the state to expand the current Autism Pilot, but frankly the current budget along with decades of under funding, make it difficult for many providers to continue existing services at current levels, let alone expand services. Community providers have been under funded for more than 20 years. By every objective measure, funding increases have failed to keep pace with inflation. It's not even close. While the Consumer Price

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Index has risen by nearly 90% in the last twenty years, cost of services increases for private providers have only gone up by about 28%. Although we appreciate the opportunity to expand services to individuals on the Autism Spectrum, funding must meet the cost of providing those services.

S. B. No. 575 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A TASK
FORCE TO STUDY DAY PROGRAM SERVICES OFFERED THROUGH THE
DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES.

S.B. 575 raises some important points regarding day program services. We support the concept of the legislation and encourage examination of the cost effectiveness of various types of day services. We believe that community providers offer services these services in an efficient and effective manner and at costs that are more than 40% lower than state provided services.

We do have three specific concerns with this legislation:

1. Although this bill recommends an examination of day program services through a task force, it identifies the desired conclusion of the task force as the “phasing out of existing sheltered workshops.” This pre-determined conclusion seems to negate the work of the Task Force. The group should be allowed to make its own independent determinations.
2. Current DDS clients receive funding through a combination state dollars and federal Medicaid dollars through the Home and Community Based Waiver. The Waiver requires individual choice and individual control of resources. We have concerns about the implications of limiting choice of program type for DDS clients. Individuals structure programs that meet their needs, interests and goals. The market should dictate the types of services provided in the DDS system. If a service type is less desirable, then over time those services should be phased out without mandates.
3. Finally, a significant number of DDS clients are currently employed in sheltered workshop programs. If this taskforce determines that these programs should be phased out, there would be a significant challenge in finding those clients employment through supported or competitive employment. Any plan related to the closure of sheltered workshops as long as it includes a workable transition that includes adequate time and funding to address related costs.

Thank you for your time and consideration.